

Vatican II and the Renewal of Religious Life

## I. General guidelines from the "Decree on the up-to-date renewal of religious life : October 1965

"The up-to-date renewal of the religious life comprises both a constant return to the sources of the whole of the Christian life and to the primitive inspiration of the institutes, and their adaption to the changed condition of our time." (2)

This contains two key directions to be followed simultaneously:

1. Rediscover the original charism of your specific founder or foundress
2. Apply that charism in new ways for the 'changed condition of our times.'

We will look at each one of these separately

## 1. Returning to the original charism:

- a, Mother Catherine McAuley in 1831 in Dublin, Ireland opened a Home of Mercy

1. apostolic work- works of mercy in the environment of a home ...education and health care
2. today our centers have a home of mercy in which the sisters work directly with women and men . In some places this is separate from a convent and a house of studies , and in others it is combined in a single home.
3. the key is to avoid large institutional structures and to have an intense relationship between the sisters and the guests in the home of mercy
4. Our particular community is a renewed community of Religious Sisters of Mercy with centers in the United States, Canada, and Europe. The Montreal foundation began in September 1984

## 2. Up date for the changed condition of our times.

- a. development of professional basis from which to do works of mercy.

1. eg. physicians, lawyers, nurses with Ph. D, and other sisters with doctorates in such fields as speech therapy, urban planning, philosophy, theology, health care administration, etc.
2. in addition to this educational base sisters are also moving into new areas of professional work: such as engineering, banking, agricultural science, computers, mortician, drama and theater, etc.

- b. In our community each sister is expected to achieve a sufficiently high degree of professional training to be able to 'build up the earth' and carry out the creative work of God within her own field of expertise.

- c. In Montreal, Sister Barbara Anne Gooding is on the Faculty of Nursing and works primarily with MA Students in nursing at McGill and Sr. Prudence is in the Department of Philosophy at Concordia University.

II. The need for an equally intense renewal of community life.

- a. The increased intensity of professional life demands an increase in the intensity of community life to balance and guard against isolated and egotistical professional excellence.
  1. daily shared eucharist
  2. sung office morning and evening
  3. the practice of the perfection of daily acts ( the common life as the place for perfecting the four vows of poverty, chastity, obedience, and service)
  4. the communal practice of manual labor...housework, renovation, gathering of firewood, building, farming, tending, vineyards, fishing, etc.
- b. community life links prayer and work. It enables sisters to remain consecrated women as they respond inwardly and outwardly to Christ's call to rebuild the earth
- c. vibrant community life becomes the well spring out of which the professional lives of women religious flow

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Conclusion from the Decree

" Religious should remember that the example of their own lives is the best commendation of their institutes and is an invitation to others to take on the religious life."